

A Culture of Accountability

**An Interview with Donald Scanlon,
Chief Financial Officer and Chief of
Corporate Services, Mount Sinai Health System**



Donald Scanlon

EDITORS' NOTE Donald Scanlon's leadership role builds upon over a decade of achievement at Mount Sinai that began in 2003 when he was appointed Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of The Mount Sinai Medical Center. Previously, he had been Senior Vice President of Finance at New York Presbyterian Hospital & Health System and, before that, Vice President of Finance at Mount Sinai for 10 years, including several years when Mount Sinai and New York University were merged. Scanlon is a member of the Board of Healthfirst and the Board of HANYS Insurance Company. He began his career as an Audit Manager at Deloitte & Touche, where he focused on

healthcare clients. He has been a Certified Public Accountant in New York State since 1987, and is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the New York State Society of Certified Public Accountants.

What made the recent transformation work so well, and what has it been like to maintain and strengthen your position year after year?

I had previously worked at Mount Sinai and left, but I came back because I love and believe in Mount Sinai and have great respect for many of the people who work here. I also have great respect for Ken Davis (President and Chief Executive Officer). He has the same passion for Mount Sinai that I do.

I came back at a difficult time for Mount Sinai. The merger with NYU had been challenging and we had lost focus. But I knew that the necessary elements for greatness were here – cutting-edge research, high quality patient care, devoted staff, and a highly motivated and focused senior management team.

We turned Mount Sinai's performance around by focusing on fundamentals and fostering a culture of accountability. People were encouraged to make changes and were held accountable to meet goals. We also became a data-driven institution, focused on ensuring transparency and empowering people to use data to manage to our expectations.

By late 2003, there was a noticeable improvement in morale as the institution began to assume the same enthusiasm and focused attention that senior management had and as new initiatives began to succeed. We made sure to engage physicians in the process to find solutions to the problems they faced. We implemented discipline around spending and created a can-do culture.

We have a lot of long-term employees that love this institution and who appreciate the chance to participate in Mount Sinai's success. With some good recruiting by senior management, we started to turn the tide.

Today, as new people come on, in order for them to succeed, they have to uphold the culture we built and value a focus on continuous improvement. This requires a willingness to be the ones to make the changes and put an emphasis on managing with data.

How important is it to continue to invest in technology and innovation?

Information technology is critical to our clinicians and patients. We have made a large investment in IT and we continue to invest. The care that is provided in the future will not be as hospital-centric as it is today. A hospital in our system will look much different in the future and that transformation will largely be driven by technology. ●

The Patient Experience

**An Interview with Sandra Myerson,
Senior Vice President and Chief Patient
Experience Officer, Mount Sinai Health System**



Sandra Myerson

EDITORS' NOTE Sandra Myerson assumed her current post in November 2014. Before this, she held positions as Director, Clinical & Operational Improvement Consulting Services with Press Ganey Associates; President and Chief Executive Officer, SLM Consulting; Vice President, Patient Care Services and Chief Nursing Officer, Aria Health; Executive Director, Ambulatory and Emergency Services, WellStar Health System; Executive Director, Emergency Services, WellStar Health System; and AVP, Healthcare Services, Albert Einstein Healthcare Network. She received her M.B.A. and M.S. from Temple University-Fox School of Business and Management and her B.S. in Nursing from Penn State University.

How do you define your role at Mount Sinai and what are your key areas of focus?

My role is to provide guidance to the system on how to improve the patient experience, providing strategies and tactics.

System leaders set the goals for patient experience prior to my arrival. My role is to help figure out how we accomplish these goals.

We are improving the patient experience at each of the hospitals and across the ambulatory care practices, and while efforts are customized for each location, there are a few key tenets that apply to all. There are some basics for the hospitals, such as purposeful hourly rounding by nursing staff and daily nurse manager rounding.

Employee engagement, reward, and recognition are also important. This means that senior leaders must be visible around their facility so they get to know their staffs, and ensure they feel appreciated and valued.

We're also working on physician communication skills to help doctors connect with patients. Our doctors are fantastic clinicians; we want them to be fantastic communicators as well.

In addition, we're also creating physician comparative scorecards to learn how physicians compare to each other across the system, both within their own practice and across practices.

It is challenging to standardize as the system has grown?

The approach is different at each of the facilities based on the culture, the leadership, and their resources. However, the messaging – how we say things and what we expect – is the same.

Do you worry that technology is taking away from the personal touch and the human relationship?

When we implement new technology, the clinician's time and attention is often spent learning how to navigate it, and it takes away from the time he or she spends with the patient.

A great deal of effort goes into figuring out how to incorporate technology that helps patients feel engaged in the process.

How significant is a positive patient experience to the overall health of the patient?

Clinical outcomes, operational processes, and patient experience are interrelated.

When we make personal connections with patients and patients are confident in our ability to care safely for them, they will tell us things that are important for us to know from a clinical perspective in order to deliver great care.

When patients feel we care, they will listen to our instructions and adhere to those care guidelines.

How critical is it to drive a service mentality throughout the organization?

It's not enough now to just deliver great clinical care. People have to feel cared about and, if that is the expectation, then we have to figure out how to deliver on that. ●